The World

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WANTED, AN OPTIMIST.

Mayor McClellan lets it be known that he will appoint a lawyer to the Rapid Transit Commissionership left vacant by Mr. Claflin's resignation.

The Board has need of a lawyer—the Belmont contract made that clear. But it has greater need of an optimist. It badly wants a member accustomed to look on the bright side of things and not obsessed by the fear that underground traction must go to the dogs—unless it goes to the merger.

The conditions by no means justify the Board's gloomy forebodings.

There is admittedly, to begin with, an available borrowing capacity of $50,000,000. This is ample for the construction of the Third avenue road. In addition, the next assessment will show taxable values enormously increased and the debt limit correspondingly extended. It is not too much to say that within a half mile radius of the Waldorf there has in a year been an increment of property values sufficient of itself to furnish the funds for a subway.

In the matter of a lessee, is capital taking the twenty-year-lease bugaboo seriously? There are 2,000,000 new citizens to come within that period, and a twenty-year renewal to follow. And there is the demonstrated fact that the Interborough is carrying passengers for one and four-fifths cents apiece and showing an earning power equivalent to five per cent. on the investment on the basis of a three-cent fare!

What is there in that to affright capital? The doubts entertained are equally baseless with those expressed over the future of the original subway. They are less creditable because of the object lesson in their foolishness that the first week of operation gave.

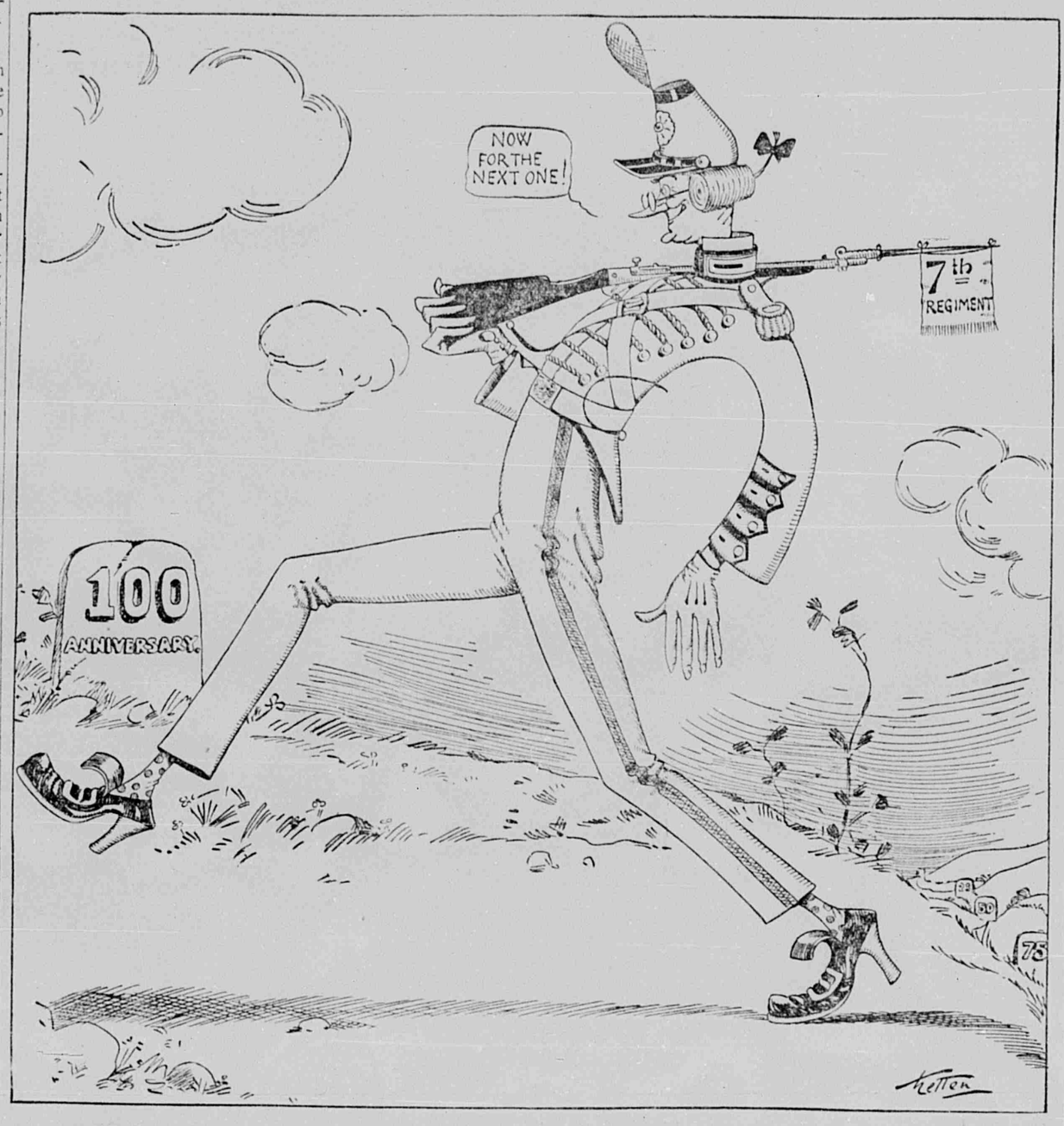
Critics of the Steel Trust's opposition to the plan of taking off the tariff on steel for the benefit of San Francisco fail to note the dangers lurking in this precedent. The camel's head would then be under the tent. Illogical persons would next be asking that what was done out of charity to one part of the nation should be done for all.

THE SUNDAY WORLD'S FICTION FEATURE.

With the first chapters of Robert Barr's "A Rock in the Baltic" the Sunday World to-morrow begins its series of "twelve new novels by twelve famous authors." This will be the most notable fiction offering in the history of Sunday Journalism. These novels are in no sense reprints. They represent the newest and freshest work of the foremost contemporary writers, secured for publication first of all in the Sunday World special magazine previous to their appearance in book form. On the list are the names of Amelia Barr, Mrs. Burton Harrison, Mrs. Craigie, Mrs. Atherton, Eden Philpotts, Anna Katharine Green, Ian MacLaren and Max Pemberton. They will comprise a five-cent library of high-class fiction which in quality and variety and in distinction of authorship has never been surpassed in newspaper enterprise. In receiving their first publication in a newspaper they reach the public through an unusual agency, but an agency, as President Nicholas Murray Butler says, than which "there is none fitter to spread good literature."

A Long March.

By Maurice Ketten.



NEW YORK THRO' FUNNY-GLASSES

By Irvin S. Cobb.

WE—meaning by "we" all who have been here long enough to vote the Tammany ticket, which is sixty days ordinarily, ninety in extreme cases—are mighty fond of thinking that the only desirable thing you could get back home was a ticket to New York. You don't become a real Manhattanese until you acquire the happy knack of slandering the town where you came from. The red brick court-house with the fluted pillars and the tree out front, where they lynched the Yandall boys, never begins to seem insignificant until you get used to the Flatiron Building.

It is customary to throw a shudder of horror when reminded of the parlor at the old place. Well, Sanford and Merton, it was pretty fierce, wasn't it? Do you remember the marble table with the dropsy of the legs and the chilled morgue slab for a top? And the horsehair sofa from the Glacial period? And the walls, slick and white and shiny like the inside of an egg, relieved by a cheerful funeral wreath of wax flowers in a glass case and a crayon portrait of Uncle Henry enlarged from a photograph showing Uncle Henry in the act of wearing his annual collar? The portrait didn't do Uncle Henry justice, but the frame did. It cost $5, and the agent threw in the portrait in consideration of our taking the frame. Dear Uncle Henry! Every well-regulated family had him. His idea of a good time was to sit up with somebody who was dead and argue Infant Damnation in the affirmative.

The companion piece to Uncle Henry was Aunt Melissa, whose new

store teeth used to slip outside when she got excited and try to bite her. She rode in a second carriage at every funeral that took place in Wingo township for forty years except once. That once was the time she rode in the hearse. Her severely plain Doric or lignum vitae features were embalmed in the family photograph album, that dear old velvet tome with latches on it like a smoke-house door and pictures of long-faced second cousins with their front hair frizzed low on the brow like trotting horses or princesses of a royal family of Europe. The other half of the parlor literature was a chaste volume entitled "Treasures of the Prose World," that weighed eleven pounds, and when you held it in your lap your legs went to sleep and the circulation suspended below the knees.

But we forget what was behind the scenes—the hot biscuit, and eleven kinds of preserves for supper, and the bedroom big enough to hold a county convention in, and real milk from a real cow, and spring chickens that were not Shanghai welter weights trained down to the bantam class.

We may think we've got that kind of living skinned to a core here on Lobster Island, but have we—even in the haughtiest and the most exclusive of our apartment houses? To be sure there is the brocaded entrance cluttered with coons in uniform and onyx pillars, and a ferocious untamed elevator in a gilded cage. But what of your little suite of pigeon holes on the nineteenth floor—what of the library which so closely resembles a lock box that you feel like second-class mail matter all the time you're in it? What of the kitchen where there isn't room for the cook and a pot roast at the same time, and the bathroom that is crowded to suffocation by the bathtub and one towel?

THE FUNNY PART:

In New York you get all of your backing out of your front.

The Helmet of Navarre by Bertha Runkle

Author of "THE TRUTH ABOUT TOLNA."

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Felix Broux is page to Count Etienne de Mar, estranged son of the Duke of St. Quentin, a powerful French noble. The period is 1593, when Henry of Navarre, claimant of the French throne, is besieging Paris. The city is held by the League, under the Duke of Mayenne. St. Quentin is a follower of Henry. Mar has lately come to Paris, Mayenne's nephew. Paul de Lorraine tries to make Mar assassinate St. Quentin. Mar and Paul both love Lorance de Montluc, Mayenne's ward. Etienne rescues St. Quentin from a gang of Mayenne's men, and father and son are reconciled. Mar disguises himself as an Italian jeweller and dresses Felix as a girl. Together they start for Mayenne's palace, where Mar hopes to get a word in private with Lorance. They know that if captured they will probably be killed.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Double Masquerade.

"FELIX, we are speaking in our own tongue. It is such lapses as those bring men to the gallows. Italian from this word, my girl."

"Monsieur, I have no notion how to bear myself, what to say," I answered uneasily.

"Say as little as you can. For, I confess, your voice and your hands give me pause; otherwise I would take you anywhere for a lass. Your part must be the shy maiden. My faith, you look the role; your cheeks are poppies! You will follow docile at my heels while I tell lies for two. I have the hope that the ladies will heed me and my jewels more than you."

"Monsieur, could we not go sateller at night?"

"I have thought of that. But at night the household gathers in the salon; we should run the gantlet of a hundred looks and tongues. While now, if we have luck, we may win to mademoiselle's own chamber"—— He broke off abruptly and walked along in a day dream.

"Well," he resumed presently, coming back to the needs of the moment, "let us know our names and station. I am Giovanni Rossini, son of the famous goldsmith of Florence; you, Giulietta, my sister. We come to Paris in the legate's train, trade being dull at home, the gentry having fled to the hills for the hot month. Of course you've never set foot out of France, Fe—Giulietta?"

"Never out of St. Quentin till I came hither. But Father Francesco has talked to me much of his city of Florence."

"Good; you can then make shift to answer a question or two if put to it. Your Italian, I swear, is of excellent quality. You speak French like the Picard you are, but Italian like a gentleman—that is to say, like a lady."

"Monsieur," I bemoaned miserably, "I shall never come through it alive, never in the world. They will know me in the flick of an eye for a boy; I know they will. Why, the folk we are passing can see something wrong; they are all staring at me."

"Of course they stare," he answered tranquilly. I should think some wrong if they did not. Can your modesty never understand, my Giulietta, what a pretty lass you are?"

He fell to laughing at my discomfort, and thus, he full of gay confidence, I full of misgiving, we came before the doors of the Hotel de Lorraine.

"Courage," he whispered to me. "Courage will conquer the devil himself. Put a good face on it and take the plunge." The next moment he was in the archway, deluging the sentry with his rapid Italian.

"Nom d'un chien! What's all this? What are you after?" the man shouted at us to make us understand the better. "Haven't you a word of honest French in your head?"

M. Etienne, tapping his box, very brokenly, very laboriously stammered forth something about jewels for the ladies.

"Get in with you, then."

We were not slow to obey.

The courtyard was deserted, nor did we see any one in the windows of the house, against which the afternoon sun struck hotly. To keep out his unwelcome rays the house door was pushed almost shut. We paused a moment on the step to listen to the voices of gossiping lackeys within, and then M. Etienne boldly knocked.

There was a scurrying in the hall, as if half a dozen idlers were plunging into their doublets and running to their places. Then my good friend Pierre opened the door. In the row of underlings at his back I recognized the two who had taken part in my flogging. The cold sweat broke out upon me lest they in their turn should know me.

M. Etienne looked from one to another with the childlike smile of his bare lips, demanding if any here spoke Italian.

"I," answered Pierre himself. "Now, what may your errand be?"

"Oh, it's soon told," M. Etienne cried volubly, as one delighted to find himself understood. "I am a jeweller from Florence; I am selling my wares in your great houses. I have but just sold a necklace to the Duchesse de Joyeuse; I crave permission to show my trinkets to the fair ladies here. But take me up to them and they'll not make you repent it."

"Go tell madame," Pierre bade one of his men, and turning again to us gave us kindly permission to set down our burden and wait.

For incredible good luck the heavy hangings were drawn over the sunny windows, making a soft twilight in the room. I sidled over to a bench in the far corner and was feeling almost safe when Pierre—beshrew him!—called attention to me.

"Now, that is a heavy box for a maid to help lug. Do you make the lasses do porters' work, you Florentines?"

"But I am a stranger here," M. Etienne explained. "Did I hire a porter how am I to tell an honest one? Belike he might run off with all my treasures, and where is poor Giovanni then? Besides, it were cruel to leave my little sister in our lodging, not a soul to speak to, the long day through. There is none where we lodge knows Italian, as you do so like an angel, Sir Master of the Household."

Now, Pierre was no more maitre d'hotel than I was, but that did not dampen his pleasure to be called so. He sat down on the bench by M. Etienne.

"How came you two to be in Paris?" he asked.

My lord proceeded to tell him I know not what glib and convincing farrago, with every excellence, I made no doubt, of accent and gesture. But I could not listen; I had affairs of my own by this time. The lackeys had come up close round me, more interested in me than in my brother, and the same Jean who had held me for my beating, who had wanted my coat stripped off me that I might be whacked to bleed, now said:

"I'll warrant you're hot and tired and thirsty, mademoiselle, for all you look as fresh as cress. Will you drink a cup of wine if I fetch it?"

I had kept my eyes on the ground from the first moment of encounter, in mortal dread to look these men in the face; but now, gaining courage, I raised my glance and smiled at him bashfully and faltered that I did not understand.

He understood the sense if not the words of my answer, and repeated his offer slowly, loudly. I strove to look as blank as the wall, and shook my head gently and helplessly and turned an inquiring gaze to the others, as if beseeching them to interpret. One of the fellows clapped Jean on the shoulder with a roar of laughter.

"A fall, a fall!" he shouted. "Here's the all-conquering Jean Marchand tripped up for once. He thinks nothing that wears petticoats can withstand him, but here's a maid that hasn't a word to throw at him."

"Pshaw! she doesn't understand me," Jean returned, undaunted, and promptly pointed a finger at my mouth and then raised his fist to his own, with sucks and gulps. I allowed myself to comprehend then. I smiled in as coquettish a fashion as I could contrive and glanced on the ground, and slowly looked up again and nodded.

The men burst into loud applause.

"Good old Jean! Jean wins. Well played, Jean! Vive Jean!"

Jean, flushed with triumph, ran off on his errand, while I thought of Margot, the steward's daughter, at home, and tried to recollect every air and grace I had ever seen her flaunt before us lads. It was not bad fun, this. I hid my hands under my apron and spoke not at all, but sighed and smiled and blushed under their stares like any fine lady. Once in one's life, for one hour, it is rather amusing to be a girl. But that is quite long enough, say I.

"I Shall Never Come Through It Alive; Never in the World!"

Jean came again directly with a great silver tankard.

"Burgundy, pardieu!" cried one of his mates, sticking his nose into the pot as it passed him, and full! Ciel, you must think your lass has a head."

"Oh, I shall drink with her," Jean answered.

I put out my hand for the tankard, running the risk of my big paw's betraying me, resolved that he should not drink with me of that draught, when of a sudden he leaned over to snatch a kiss. I dodged him, more frightened than the shyest maid. Though in this half light I might perfectly look a girl I could not believe I should kiss like one. In a panic I fled from Jean to my master's side.

M. Etienne, wheeling about, came near to laughing out in my face, when he remembered his part and played it with a zeal that was like to undo us. He sprang to his feet, drawing his dagger.

"Who insults my sister?" he shouted. "Who is the dog does this?"

They were on him, wrenching the knife from his hand, wrenching his lame arm at the same time so painfully that he gasped. I was scared chill. I knew if they mishandled him they would brush the wig off.

"Mind your manners, sirrah!" Jean cried.

Monsieur's ardor vanished; a gentle, appealing smile spread over his face.

"I cry your pardon, sir," he said to Jean; then turning to Pierre, "This messer does not understand me. But tell him, I beg you, I crave his good pardon. I was but angered for a moment that any should think to touch my little sister. I meant no harm."

"Nor he," Pierre retorted. "A kiss, forsooth! What do you expect with a handsome lass like that? If you will take her about"——

"Madame says the jeweller fellow is to come up," our messenger announced, returning.

My lord besought Pierre:

"My knife? I may have my knife? By the beard of St. Peter I swear to you I meant no harm with it. I drew it in jest."

Now this, which was the sole true statement he had made since our arrival, was the only one Pierre did not quite believe. He took the knife from Jean, but he hesitated to hand it over to its owner.

"No," he said, "you were angry enough. I know your Italian temper. I'm thinking I'll keep this little toy of yours till you come down."

"Very well, Sir Majordomo," M. Etienne rejoined indifferently, "so be it you give it to me when I go." He grasped the handle of the box, and we followed our guide up the stair, my master offering me the comforting assurance:

"It really matters not in the least, for if we be caught the dagger's not yet forged can save us."

We were ushered into a large, fair chamber hung with arras, the carpet under our feet deep and soft as moss. At one side stood the bed, raised on its dais; opposite were the windows, the dressing table between them, covered with scent bottles and boxes, brushes and combs, very glittering and grand. Fluttering about the room were some half dozen fine dames and demoiselles, brave in silks and jewels. Among them I was quick to recognize Mme. de Mayenne, and I thought I knew vaguely one or two other faces as those I had seen before about her. I started presently to discover the little Mlle. de Tavanne; that night she had worn sky color and now she wore rose, but there was no mistaking her saucy face.

We set our box on a table, as the duchess bade us, and I helped M. Etienne to lay out its contents, which done I retired to the background, well content to leave the brunt of the business to him. It was as he prophesied: they paid me no heed whatever. He was smoothly launched on the third relating of his tale; I trow by this time he almost believed it himself. Certes he never faltered, but rattled on as if he had two tongues, telling in confidential tone of our father and mother, our little brothers and sisters at home in Florence; our journey with the legate, his kindness and care of us (I hoped that dignitary would not walk in just now to pay his respects to madame la generale), of our arrival in Paris and our wonder and delight at the city's grandeur, the like of which was not to be found in Italy, and last, but not least, he had much to say with an innocent, wide-eyed gravity, in praise of the ladies of Paris, so beautiful, so witty, so generous! They were all crowding around him, calling him pretty boy, laughing at his compliments, handling and exclaiming over his trinkets, trying the effect of a buckle or a bracelet, preening and cooing like bright-breasted pigeons about the corn-thrower. It was as pretty a sight as ever I beheld, but it was not to smile at such that we had risked our heads. Of Mlle. de Montluc there was no sign.

No one was marking me, and I wondered if I might not slip out unseen and make my way to mademoiselle's chamber. I knew she lodged on this story, near the back of the house, in a room overlooking the little street and having a turret window. But I was somewhat doubtful of my skill to find it through the winding corridors of a great palace. I was more than likely to meet some one who would question my purpose, and what answer could I make? I scarce dared say I was seeking mademoiselle. I am not ready at explanations, like M. le Comte.

Yet here were the golden moments flying and our cause no further advanced. Should I leave it all to M. Etienne, trusting that when he had made his sales here he would be permitted to seek out the other ladies of the house? Or should I strive to aid him? Could I win in safety to mademoiselle's chamber what a feat!

It so irked me to be doing nothing that I was on the very point of gingerly disappearing when one of the ladies, she with the yellow curls, the prettiest of them all, turned suddenly from the group, calling clearly:

"Lorance!"

Our hearts stood still—mine did, and I can vouch for his—as the heavy window curtain swayed aside and she came forth.

She came listlessly. Her hair sweeping against her cheek was ebony on snow, so white she was; while under her blue eyes were dark rings like the smears of an inky finger. M. Etienne let fall the bracelet he was holding, staring at her, oblivious of aught else, his brows knotted in distress, his face afire with love and sympathy. He made a step forward; I thought him about to catch her in his arms, when he recollected himself and dropped on his knees to grope for the fallen trinket.

"You wanted me, madame?" she asked Mme. de Mayenne.

"No," said the duchess with a tartness of voice she seemed to reserve for Mlle. de Montluc; "'twas Mme. de Montpensier."

"It was I," the fair-haired beauty answered in the same breath. "I want you to stop moping over there in the corner. Come look at these baubles and see if they cannot bring a sparkle to your eye. Fie, Lorance! The having too many lovers is nothing to cry about. It is an affliction many and many a lady would give her ears to undergo."

"Take heart o' grace, Lorance!" cried Mlle. de Tavanne. "If you go on looking as you look today you'll not long be troubled by lovers."

She made no answer to either, but stood there passively till it might be their pleasure to have done with her, with a patient weariness that it wrung the heart to see.

"Here's a chain would become you vastly, Lorance," Mme. de Montpensier went on, friendlily enough, in her brisk and careless voice. "Let me try it on your neck. You can easily coax Paul or some one to buy it for you."

She fumbled over the clasp. M. Etienne, with a "Permit me, madame," took it boldly from her hand and hooked it himself about mademoiselle's neck. He delayed longer than he need over the fastening of it, looking with burning intentness straight into her face. She lifted her eyes to his with a quick frown of displeasure, drawing herself back; then all at once the color waved across her face like the dawn flush over a gray sky. She blushed to her very hair, to her very ruff. Then the red vanished as quickly as it had come; she clutched at her bosom, on the verge of a swoon.

(To Be Continued.)

"The Masquerader," by Katherine Cecil Thurston, author of "The Gambler," will follow "The Helmet of Navarre," on May 19, in